



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy September 2021

### CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Definitions
4. Procedures
5. Responsibilities
6. Registration
7. Lateness
8. Absences
9. Addressing Attendance Concerns
10. Review
11. Covid19 Appendix

### POLICY APPROVAL

Policy Level:	RFPS Local Policy
Date of issue:	Sept 2021
Author:	Rugby Free Primary School
Date of Next Review:	September 2023
Signature:	 Steph Looney Chair of Governors, Local Governing Body
Date of Signature:	Sept 2021



## **Attendance Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Rugby Free Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **2. Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.



- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

### **3. Definitions**

#### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- Failure to notify the school of your child's illness will result in an unauthorised absence
- An absence, which school have clear evidence is in fact a holiday, will also be unauthorised.
- Absence, which goes on longer than that which has been authorised, will be unauthorised.

### **4. Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Compliance Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the LGB, Trust, LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team and/or Family Support Worker.

## **5. Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Completing the registers twice daily in an accurate and timely manner.
- Having an awareness of pupils's poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers
- Informing the Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings where necessary

### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance



- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Governors and Trust
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

## **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home during the school day and how many minutes of school they are missing
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Following safeguarding procedures if attendance/lateness is seen to be a child protection concern e.g. couldn't contact parents

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on every morning of absence and giving the office a reasonable explanation e.g. type of illness
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, and giving school at least 14 days notice is possible.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Always endeavour to take holidays in the school holidays and appointments after school.

## **6. Registration**



The gates open at 8.35am for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 line up with their teacher at 8.40am. Reception and Year 1 children have until 8.50am to come in to school. Year 2 pupils line up by 8.40am and are taken straight inside by their class teacher. Key Stage 2 pupils then can come on to the playground and line up with their teacher. They go in to school at 8.50am. The gate is locked promptly after 8.50am as we expect pupils to be on time for school. Any child who arrives at school after the lines have gone in should enter the school through the school office to ensure accurate registers are taken.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am in the morning and by 10 minutes after the end of the pupil's lunch time e.g Year 1 and 2 finish lunch at 12.45 so registers must be taken by 12.55pm. If there is a child missing in the afternoon register that was here in the morning, the teacher must find out the reason for the child not being there immediately. The registers are submitted electronically via Scholar Pack. If the internet is not working, or other reason, teachers are to send completed fire list registers to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using Scholar Pack MIS software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **7. Lateness**

Once the gates are closed at 8.50am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school after 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8.55am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **8. Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on every day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.



All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 8.50am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

## **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

## **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

## **9. Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially



concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school may refer on to the Attendance Compliance Service.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on our MIS software, ScholarPack. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

## **10. Review**

This policy will be reviewed biennially by Governors.

## **11.COVID-19 Attendance Policy Appendix**

This addendum to our Attendance Policy is for use during the arrangements for education of pupils in school during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is to be used in conjunction with, and read alongside, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, E-Safety Policy.

### **Purpose**

The Department for Education publish updated guidance continuously during this time to prepare children for the wider opening of all schools.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>

This addendum of our Attendance Policy contains details of our individual arrangements. We will follow Department of Education guidance to inform development of school policies as required.

### **Attendance from September 2020**

Missing out on time in school, risks all children falling behind their peers. After an extended period out of school it is vitally important that all our children return to school this autumn to minimise the impact of the pandemic.

Attendance is therefore mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term, except where statutory exemptions apply in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020. The normal rules and sanctions as outlined in Section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 (England) will now be reapplied.

From this point on the usual rules of school attendance apply;

- Parents have a duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of a compulsory school age.
- Schools have a responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence.



- Schools are able to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with the RFPS Attendance Policy.

In line with the checklist from the Department for Education, this school will ensure that it follows this five-step process at all times:

1. Plan - for full attendance for all pupils and the value of this.
2. Communicate- with all stakeholders' expectations and importance of full attendance
3. Be consistent - set and maintain culture of high expectations of all within community.
4. Support - for those within the community that need additional support to get back into school regularly.
5. Monitor and Improve to ensure that schools high expectations and additional support are having the impact intended.

### **Pupils or Parents demonstrating symptoms of Coronavirus**

Rugby Free Primary School will remind all within its community that should a child or a member of their family display any symptoms of Covid-19 they must not enter the school grounds.

Parents will inform school by contacting school if their child is ill, and/or displaying symptoms of coronavirus, and is unable to attend school as a result.

Parents should contact NHS 111online or arrange a test. Schools will regularly remind parents of what to do if they demonstrate symptoms. Rugby Free Primary School will follow the Public Health England guidance at all times when a parent or pupil demonstrates signs of Covid-19.

### **Organisation of the school day.**

Because of the expectation that to reduce risk of transmission of the virus, school will operate an extended start time to the school day.

We have amended the start of our school day to accommodate drop off between 8:40 and 9:00 every morning. This will mean that there will be a later close of registration. Children will be expected to be in school by 9:00 and registers will close at 9:10.

The Department for Education is clear that whilst schools will need to stagger start and end times for pupils to avoid mass gatherings, schools must ensure that this does not impact on teaching time for pupils.

We have ensured that we have met this expectation by adjusting our break times/lunch times and end of school day to make up for this change.

If a pupil that is expected to be in school does not attend by 9:30am RFPS will contact the pupil's parents/carers, once the registers have closed for the morning session to ensure that school staff are aware of the reasons for non-attendance. Because of the risks of transmission of Covid-19 this is vitally important.

In line with the current requirement, staff will follow PHE guidance for any child who is not attending because of coronavirus. For all other absences school staff will ensure that they follow the schools normal policy and procedure including Children Missing Education guidance.

### **Statutory exemptions In line with the latest guidance**

There are now a small number of pupils who will be exempt from mandatory attendance because of the exceptional reasons outlined below.

- Pupils who are unable to attend school in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has had coronavirus.
- If rates of the disease rise in local areas, there may be occasions where children (or family members) from that area, and that area only will be advised to shield for this period, whilst transmission rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent.

School will ensure that for these pupils, education will be provided remotely. Where children are not able to attend school for either of the reasons above, then absence will not be penalised.

### **Taking the register.**

All schools will resume normal procedures for completing the school's registers. Staff must use attendance codes consistently to ensure that an accurate record is kept. The DFE has created a new category of nonattendance for the academic year of 2020/21 to record any pupil who does not attend because the travel to, or attendance at school would be either;

- Contrary to guidance from Public Health England, or Department of Health and Social Care
- Prohibited by legislation relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19.

In line with the guidance from the Secretary of State, no parent will be penalised for following official public health guidance for their child not to attend a session.

From the start of the academic year normal registration codes will apply.

Should any pupil not attend a session because of either of the two reasons above, then the code X will be used to record their non-attendance. This code will not count as an absence in the census data.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.



If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test. If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

### **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

Parents hopefully will have planned their holidays taking into account term times. However, with the rapidly changing picture around the necessity for pupils to quarantine following a planned holiday, some pupils may not be able to return to school at the start of term. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine because of government guidance, then the Code X should be used in the register for this period.

### **Monitoring of attendance**

We will continue to monitor pupil's attendance by regularly reviewing our registers to ensure that any pupil whose attendance begins to cause concern will be invited to meet with a member of SLT.